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For Immediate Release

Judicial Nominating Commission releases names of nominees to fill vacant Family Court judgeship in Johnson, Lawrence and Martin counties

FRANKFORT, Ky., Feb. 3, 2005 — The Judicial Nominating Commission, led by Chief Justice Joseph E. Lambert, met today at the Johnson County Courthouse in Paintsville to choose nominees to replace Family Court Judge Stephen N. Frazier, who retired effective Jan. 1, 2005. The vacant Family Court judgeship serves the 24th Judicial Circuit, Division I, which is comprised of Johnson, Lawrence and Martin counties. Three attorneys were named as nominees to fill this vacancy: Michael S. Endicott, Mary Phillips and John David Preston.

Preston lives and practices in Paintsville with the firm of Perry, Preston, Miller & Daniels. His general practice of law includes personal injury work, Social Security claims, workers' compensation, title work, criminal defense work and domestic relations. Preston earned a law degree from the University of Kentucky College of Law and an A.B. degree from Harvard University.

Judicial Nominating Process

When a judicial vacancy occurs, the executive secretary of the Judicial Nominating Commission publishes a notice of vacancy in the judicial circuit or the judicial district affected. Attorneys can recommend someone or nominate themselves. The names of the applicants are not released. Once nominations occur, the individuals interested in the position return a questionnaire to the Office of Chief Justice. Chief Justice Lambert then meets with the Judicial Nominating Commission to choose three nominees. Because the Kentucky Constitution requires that three names be submitted to the governor, in some cases the commission submits an attorney's name even though the attorney did not apply. A letter naming the three nominees is sent to Gov. Ernie Fletcher for review. When the governor appoints a replacement, his office makes the announcement.

Family Court

Family Court provides one judge to hear all of a family's issues relating to divorce, child custody, adoption, termination of parental rights, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. Because Family Court is devoted exclusively to cases involving families and children, they do not compete for court time with criminal and other civil cases. Family Court is a division of Circuit Court, Kentucky's highest trial court level, and employs full-time judges with the same qualifications as those who serve other divisions of Circuit Court. With passage of an amendment in the 2002 general election, Family Court is a permanent part of the Kentucky Constitution and serves more than 2 million Kentuckians in 43 counties.

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